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## Divorce and Older School-Aged Children

by Donald Gordon, PhD.

Children age nine to twelve respond to a break-up very differently than their younger counterparts. This group is more advanced in their thinking. They are able to see many points of view in the matter. Most of the children in this age group can understand some of the reasons for the break-up. They will seriously and bravely try to make the best of it.

But these children will commonly hide their distress. They may say they are seeing their non-resident parent enough. They may say they don't feel rejected, when in fact, they miss him or her terribly!

Children at this age will also try to undo the break-up. Perhaps it is because they have no power in the matter. They are likely to feel intense anger. Unlike their younger siblings, they are very aware of their anger. Anger is normal in the break-up of a family. Part of it is because the children get a mixed message from how the parents behave. The children see themselves being punished for bad behavior but not the parents when they behave in a bad or selfish way themselves.

It is extremely important to talk often with these children at this age. They need to talk about the break-up and talk about life after the break-up. Parents can help these children by doing the adhering to the following simple, but very effective guidelines:

1. Talk to your children about their new life
2. Let them safely voice their anger
3. Be very open and honest about the chances of getting back together
4. Avoid conflict in front of them
5. Give them clear permission to love and have contact with the other parent
6. Don't put them in a position where they have to choose sides
7. Let their teachers and family doctor know about the situation

# NEWS

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